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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 002647

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: COLOMBIAN MARCHES HIGHLIGHT FARC'S ISOLATION, PUT  
PRESSURE ON GROUP TO RESPOND TO GOC OVERTURES

REF: BOGOTA 2578

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer  
Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The participation of millions of Colombians in anti-kidnapping and anti-FARC marches on July 20 showed the FARC's isolation and led to calls from across Colombia's political spectrum for the group to start peace talks with the GOC. In his remarks at the opening of Congress, President Uribe stressed the GOC's desire to seek a "definitive peace" with the FARC, and urged the group to accept a peace process. Presidential advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria told us that peace talks, if they occurred, would likely focus on the terms of the FARC's disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and justice rather than broader political issues. President Uribe told the Ambassador that he raised the FARC presence in Venezuela in general terms with President Chavez at their July 11 meeting. Chavez first denied any FARC presence, but then agreed that the issue would need to be discussed as part of a new Colombian-Venezuelan relationship. The FARC has yet to respond to the GOC's overtures. End Summary

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July 20 Marches Show FARC's Isolation  
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¶2. (U) The participation of millions of Colombians in popularly organized anti-kidnapping and anti-FARC marches throughout Colombia on July 20 highlighted the group's isolation and led to renewed calls for the FARC to enter into peace negotiations with the GOC. Participants, including Brazilian and Peruvian presidents Lula da Silva and Alan Garica, called for the immediate liberation of the FARC's kidnap victims. Many marchers also shouted "no more FARC," and called for a third term for President Uribe. In his July 20 address opening Congress, Uribe stressed the GOC's desire to seek a "definitive peace" in Colombia, and urged the FARC to accept a peace process. The Catholic Church reiterated its willingness to facilitate a dialogue between the FARC and the GOC, and former hostage Ingrid Betancourt urged FARC leader Alfonso Cano to "see Uribe's outstretched hand." National Victims' Movement head and arch-Uribe critic Ivan Cepeda also called on the FARC to immediately free all of its hostages.

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Any GOC-FARC Peace Talks Likely To Follow Paramilitary Model  
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13. (C) Presidential advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria noted Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo's efforts to establish direct contact with the FARC, but voiced doubt that the initiative would lead to serious peace talks (reftel). He said it is impossible to negotiate political or economic reforms with the FARC, since the group lacks any kind of democratic or viable agenda. The FARC claims to be interested in agrarian reform, but has never presented specific proposals. Moreover, the serious human rights charges against Alfonso Cano and other senior FARC leaders would make it impossible to discuss a future political role for them. As with the paramilitaries, peace talks with the FARC would focus on the terms of their disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and justice.

14. (C) Gaviria said the GOC's March 1 killing of FARC Secretariat member Raul Reyes is key to current GOC successes. Reyes had built an extensive diplomatic and political network through the Bolivarian Continental Coordinator, which had enabled him to exploit the humanitarian exchange issue to keep the GOC on the defensive. Reyes was also the only Secretariat member who maintained contact with his colleagues in Colombia as well as the outside world. Since his death, Cano and the other Secretariat members are extremely isolated and have largely lost their international access.

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Venezuela and the FARC  
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BOGOTA 00002647 002 OF 002

15. (C) President Uribe told the Ambassador on July 18 that his July 11 meeting with President Chavez in Punto Fijo was purely tactical. He does not believe Chavez has changed his fundamental position toward the GOC, him, or the FARC. Uribe said he raised the FARC's presence in Venezuela in general terms with Chavez, but did not press him to hand over FARC Secretariat members Ivan Marquez and Timochenko. (Note: The GOC has strong evidence that Marquez and Timochenko reside in Venezuela.) Chavez initially denied such a FARC presence, but then agreed the issue would need to be discussed as part of a new Colombian-Venezuelan relationship.

16. (C) Gaviria said Uribe's meeting with Chavez aimed to return bilateral ties to their pre-Chavez facilitation role footing, especially on commercial matters. The Colombian delegation raised numerous economic issues with the Venezuelans. Chavez agreed in principle to reestablish various economic agreements and bilateral forums, but made no specific commitments. Gaviria said Uribe and Chavez recognize "they are enemies," but speculated that Chavez "now has his feet on the ground." He claimed Chavez realizes the FARC is a failure and will pursue more pragmatic relations with Colombia. Gaviria expects Chavez to step up his support for regional leftwing political movements and to reduce his material support to the FARC. Still, he conceded that many senior Venezuelan officials, such as Military Intelligence head General Carvajal, Interior Minister Rodriguez Chacin, and Communist Party official Amilcar Figueroa, remain closely tied to the group.

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FARC's Position Unclear  
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7, (U) The FARC's response to Colombian public opinion, its recent military defeats, and the GOC offer to establish direct contact with the group remains unclear. In an undated letter signed by FARC officials Rodrigo Granda and Jesus Santrich and published in the Agencia Bolivariana de Prensa on July 21, the two dismissed Venezuelan President Chavez' call for the FARC to disarm and reiterated their commitment to armed struggle. In contrast, the Nuevo Herald reported

that the FARC's 53rd Front political commissar told it on July 20 that the FARC is interested in establishing "good faith" contacts with the GOC, but through "patriotic" military officials rather than "lying politicians."

18. (U) Former presidential peace advisor Carlos Eduardo Jaramillo said the FARC would likely remain silent on a peace process, until the Secretariat decides how to proceed on kidnapping. In a July 5 communique issued by the Secretariat, the FARC reiterated its interest in a humanitarian exchange, but did not refer to its longstanding demand that the GOC demilitarize the municipalities of Florida and Pradera as a pre-condition for talks.  
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